Levels of Depth of Knowledge for Social Studies

Level 1 (Recall) standards and assessment items require students to recall facts, terms, concepts, trends, generalizations and theories or to recognize or identify specific information contained in graphics. This level generally requires students to identify, list, or define. Standards or tasks at this level usually ask the student to recall who, what, when and where. Items that require students to “describe” and “explain” could be classified at Level 1 or 2 depending on what is to be described and explained. A Level 1 “describe or explain” would recall, recite or reproduce information. Items that require students to recognize or identify specific information contained in maps, charts, tables, graphs or drawings are generally level 1.

Some examples that represent but do not constitute all of Level 1 performance are:

•Recognize the importance of U.S. symbols.

•List characteristics of good citizenship.

•Describe different types of jobs in an economic system and the types of tools used.

•Identify significant individuals responsible for the development of the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies.

•Use latitude and longitude to locate places.

•Describe the role of the three branches of government in the U.S.

Level 2 (Basic Application of Concepts & Skills) includes the engagement of some mental processing beyond recalling or reproducing a response. This level generally requires students to contrast or compare people, places, events and concepts; convert information from one form to another; give an example; classify or sort items into meaningful categories; describe, interpret or explain issues and problems, patterns, reasons, cause and effect, significance or impact, relationships, points of view or processes. A Level 2 “describe or explain” would require students to go beyond a description or explanation of recalled information to describe or explain a result or “how” or “why.”

Some examples that represent but do not constitute all of Level 2 performance are:

•Distinguish between primary and secondary sources.

•Describe technological developments that shaped European exploration.

•Identify and explain significant events leading up to the American Revolution.

•Discuss the concept of Manifest Destiny.

•Explain how the three branches of government in the U.S. were designed to set up a system of checks and balances.

Level 3 (Strategic Thinking& Complex Reasoning) requires reasoning, using evidence, and a higher level of thinking than the previous two levels. Students would go beyond explaining or describing “how and why” to justifying the “how and why” through application and evidence. The cognitive demands at Level 3 are more complex and more abstract than Levels 1 or 2. Items at Level 3 include drawing conclusions; citing evidence; applying concepts to analyze new situations; using concepts to solve problems; analyzing similarities and differences in issues and problems; proposing and evaluating solutions to problems; recognizing and explaining misconceptions or making connections across time and place to explain a concept or big idea.

Some examples that represent but do not constitute all of Level 3 performance are:

•Describe the introduction, impact, and role of slavery in the colonies.

•Examine and explain the changing roles and impact of significant women during the American Revolution.

•Compare and contrast Federalist and Anti-Federalist views of government.

•Trace the development of technology and the impact of major inventions on business productivity during the early development of the United States.

•Differentiate fact from opinion, utilizing appropriate historical research and fiction/nonfiction

support materials.

•Discuss the impact of westward expansion on cultural practices and migration patterns of Native American and African slave populations.

Level 4 (Extended Thinking &Complex Reasoning) standards and assessment items com bine the strategic thinking of Level 3 with the addition of planning, investigating, or developing that will require an extended period of time. The extended time period is not a distinguishing factor if the required work is only repetitive and does not require applying significant conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking. At this level the cognitive demands should be high and the work should require in-depth analysis using multiple sources. Students should connect and relate ideas and concepts within the content area or among content areas through research in order to be at this highest level. The distinguishing factor for Level 4 would be evidence through a task or product that the cognitive demands have been met. A Level 4 standard or assessment item will require students to analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources, examine and explain alternative perspectives across a variety of sources, and/or describe and illustrate how common themes and concepts are found across time and place. In some Level 4 performances students will make predictions with evidence as support, develop a logical argument, or plan and develop solutions to problems. Standards, goals, and objectives can be stated so as to expect students to perform thinking at this level. On-demand assessments that do include tasks, products, or extended responses would be classified as Level 4.

Some examples that represent but do not constitute all of Level 4 performance are:

•Using primary sources, write an analysis of the historical development of significant sociocultural and/or socioeconomic trends and developments (e.g., women’s/worker’s rights, race relations, religious influences).

•Produce a presentation that compares and contrasts various political systems (e.g., democracy, communism, democratic socialism, anarchy, etc.).

•Write an essay linking the significance of geological location and resources on the economic and social development of a country or region.

•Design a study of regional natural resources and assess the impact of human development and use.